



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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ADPH releases findings on illnesses linked to Oak Mountain State Park

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Alabama Department of Public Health has conducted an epidemiological investigation into the reports of illness among recent visitors to Oak Mountain State Park. Based on the results of the investigation, the outbreak occurred among visitors to the park on Thursday, May 27, and swimmers that day were more likely to contract illness than nonswimmers.

Although the investigation did not seek to identify the total number of ill persons, many persons became ill. The symptoms reported included nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. Several ill persons required medical attention. Norovirus, a common cause of gastrointestinal illness, was detected in a specimen from one ill person, and it was the most likely cause of the outbreak.

Enterococcus, fecal coliform, and E. coli tests were conducted on water from various locations of the swimming area and met the usual standards of quality for recreational water. In addition, results from the three tests that the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources performed on the lake water for E. coli have come back normal.

"We regret persons became ill while visiting Oak Mountain State Park," says Karen Sullivan, ADPH surveillance nurse. "At this point it appears norovirus was somehow introduced in the swimming water on May 27, and swimmers subsequently were exposed. There is no evidence that a person is currently at risk of getting sick from swimming in the lake."

Norovirus is a common viral cause of gastrointestinal illness. The virus is highly infectious, and symptoms usually last one to three days.

Illnesses in recreational waters are caused by germs spread by swallowing, breathing in mists or aerosols of, or having contact with contaminated water in swimming pools, water parks, hot tubs, interactive fountains, water play areas, lakes, rivers or oceans.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, children, pregnant women, and people with weakened immune systems can suffer from more severe illness if infected. These include people living with AIDS, individuals who have received an organ transplant, or people receiving certain types of chemotherapy. Individuals with weakened immune systems should be

aware that recreational water might be contaminated with human or animal feces containing germs that can cause severe disease in persons with weakened immune systems.

Illness

Add one

The CDC recommends you follow these six steps for a safe and healthy swimming experience:

Three Steps for all Swimmers

1. Don't swim when you have diarrhea.
2. Don't get pool water in your mouth.
3. Practice good hygiene. Shower with soap before swimming and wash your hands after using the toilet or changing diapers. Germs on your body end up in the water.

Three Steps for Parents of Young Children

1. Take your children on bathroom breaks or check diapers often.
2. Change diapers in a bathroom or a diaper-changing area and not at poolside.
3. Wash your children thoroughly with soap and water before they go swimming.

Visit CDC's Healthy Swimming Web site at www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming to learn how to protect yourself and others by following tips for healthy swimming.